

Town of Bridgewater Survey June 2008

Data Evaluation Report

**Project Directed and
Report Authored By:**

Deniz Leuenberger, PhD

Faculty Director of the BSC Institute for Regional Development
With Assistance of Bridgewater State College MPA Students

RESEARCH NOTE: The Survey Document used in this study was not created by the BSC IRD. These results are a reporting and analysis of existing data made available to the institution. The research/data collection methodology was not constructed by BSC IRD staff or faculty.

**Institute for Regional Development
Bridgewater State College
June 2008**

Introduction

The following report captures, in chart and narrative form, the results of the town government survey taken of Bridgewater residents in June 2008. In the fall of 2007, the voters of Bridgewater approved the formation of the *Town Government Study Committee*. The mission of this committee is to look at the general makeup of town government and to make recommendations to the Town regarding the current form of government and possible alternative forms of town government. This report presents data gathered in an effort to help the *Committee* better make recommendations.

Figure 1

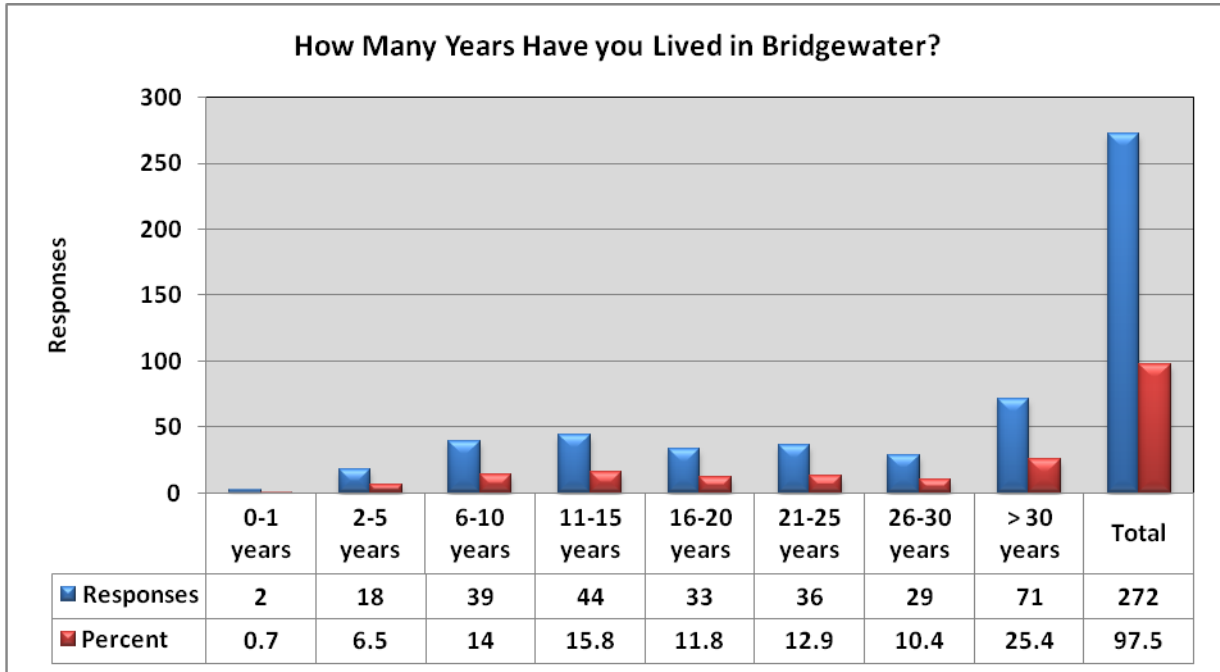


Figure 1 shows the number of years the respondent lived in Bridgewater. In addition, the chart shows the frequency each time frame was identified. There were eight possible choices for this question. Respondents lived in Bridgewater for the following years: 0-1 years (.7%), 2 -5 years (6.5%), 6- 10 years (14.0%), 11- 15 years (15.8%), 16-20 years (11.8%), 21-25 (12.9%), 26-30 (10.4%), Over 30 (25.4%).

Figure 2

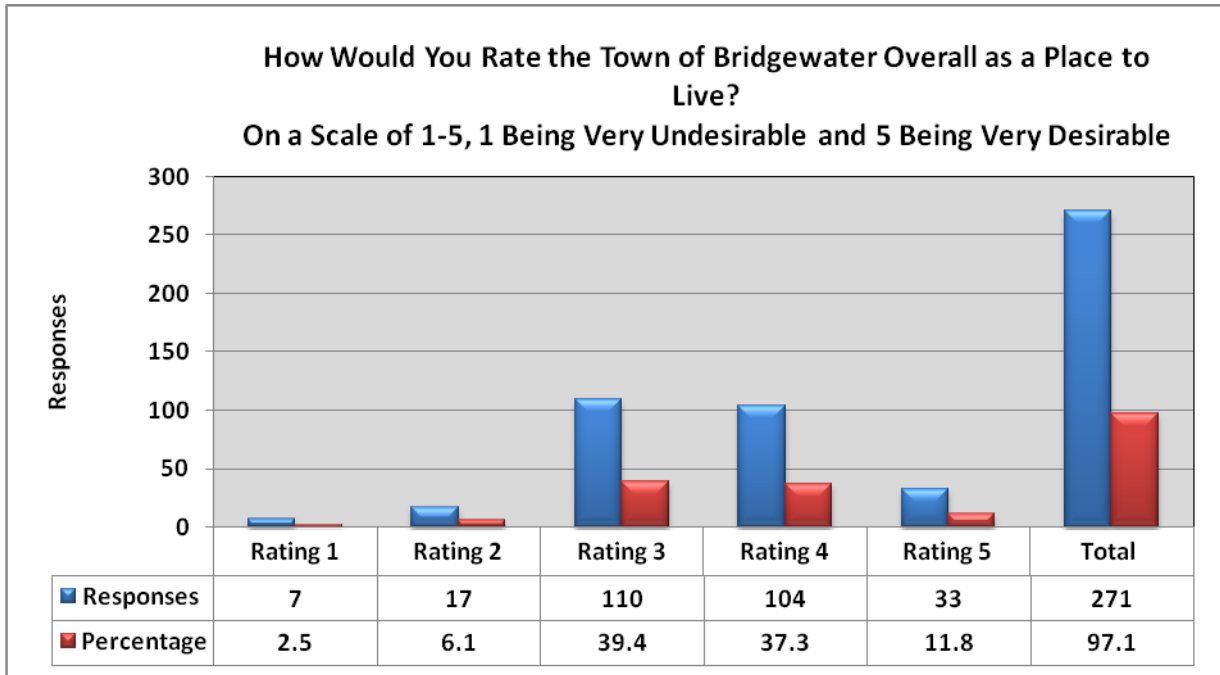


Figure 2 shows on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being very undesirable and 5 being very desirable) how each respondent evaluated Bridgewater as a place to live. There were five possible choices for this question. Respondents graded Bridgewater in the following manner: Level 1 (2.5%), Level 2 (6.1%), Level 3 (39.4%), Level 4 (37.3%), Level 5 (11.8%). This data shows respondents feel positive about living in Bridgewater.

Figure 3

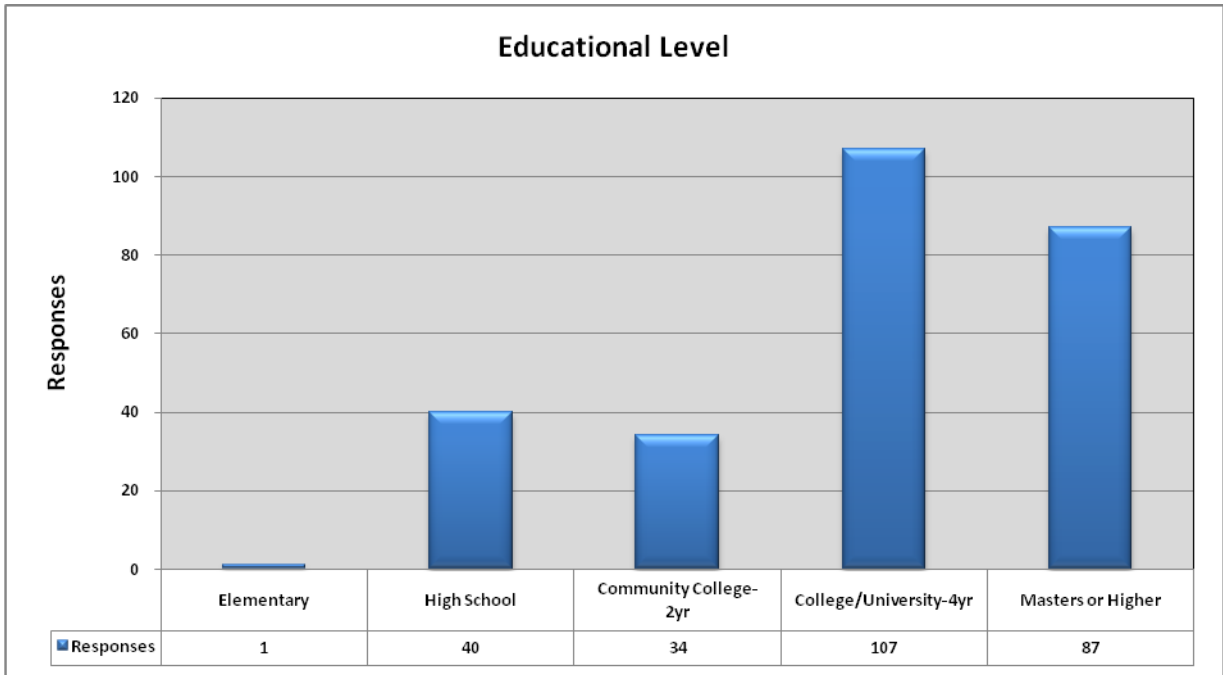


Figure 3 shows the highest level and frequency of education attained by each respondent. There were five possible choices for this question. Respondents completed their education at the following levels: elementary school (.4%), high school (14.3%), community college (12.2%), college/university (38.4%), or masters/higher (31.2%).

Figure 4

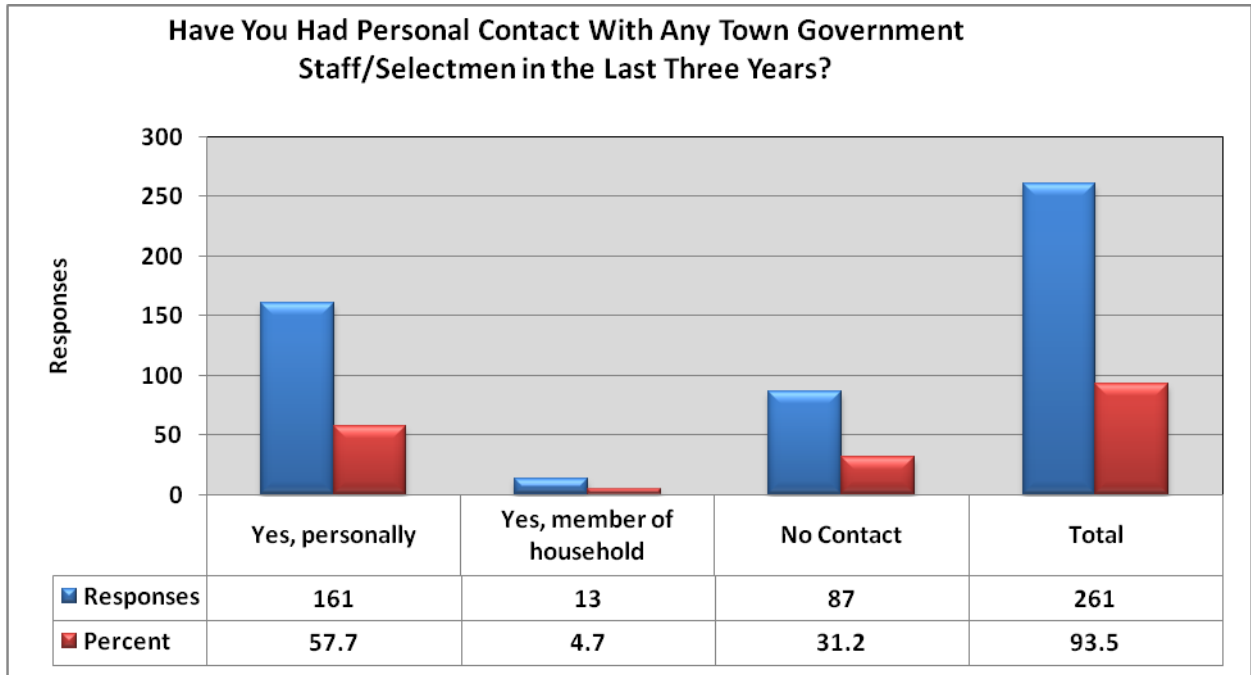


Figure 4 shows the contact each respondent had with town government in the last three years. In addition, the chart shows the frequency of each contact. There were three possible choices for this question. Respondents had a personal contact (57.7%), a member of the respondent's household had contact (4.7%), and no contact (31.2%).

Figure 5

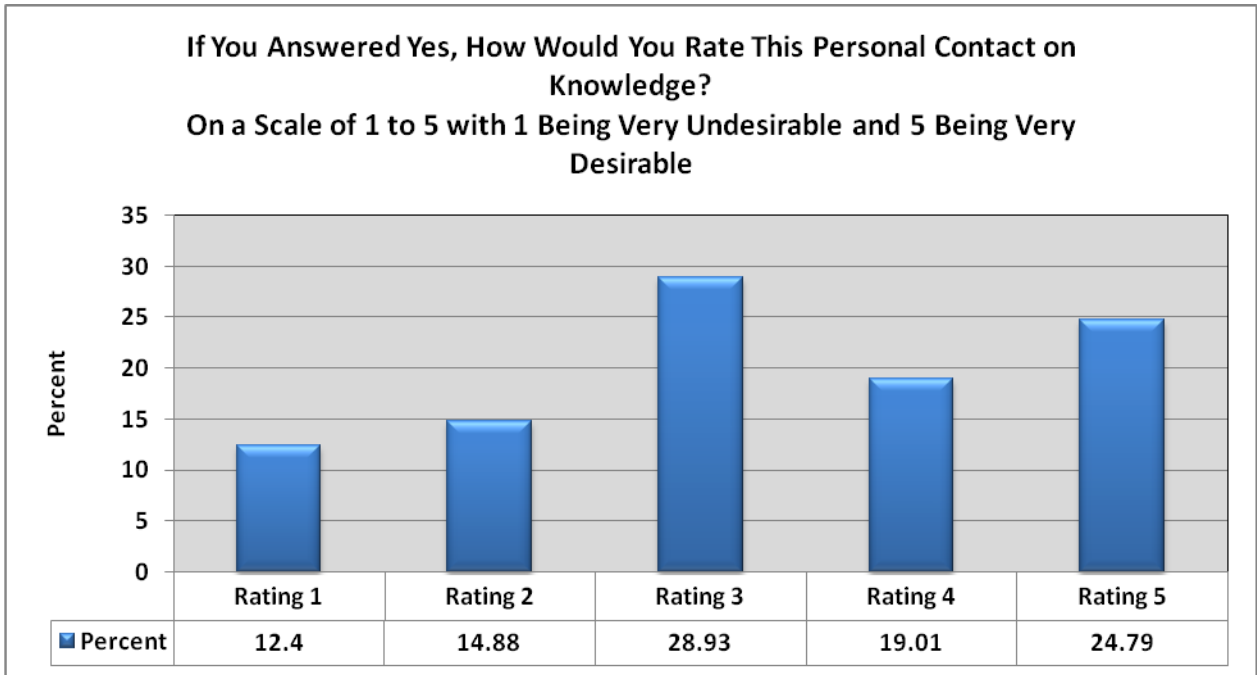


Figure 5 shows the rating that the individual gave for the knowledge of the selectman or government staff that they have had contact with. There were five possible ratings that could be given by the individual and those are as follows, a rating of 1 (12.4%), a rating of 2 (14.88%), a rating of 3 (28.93%), a rating of 4 (19.01%), a rating of 5 (24.79%).

Figure 6

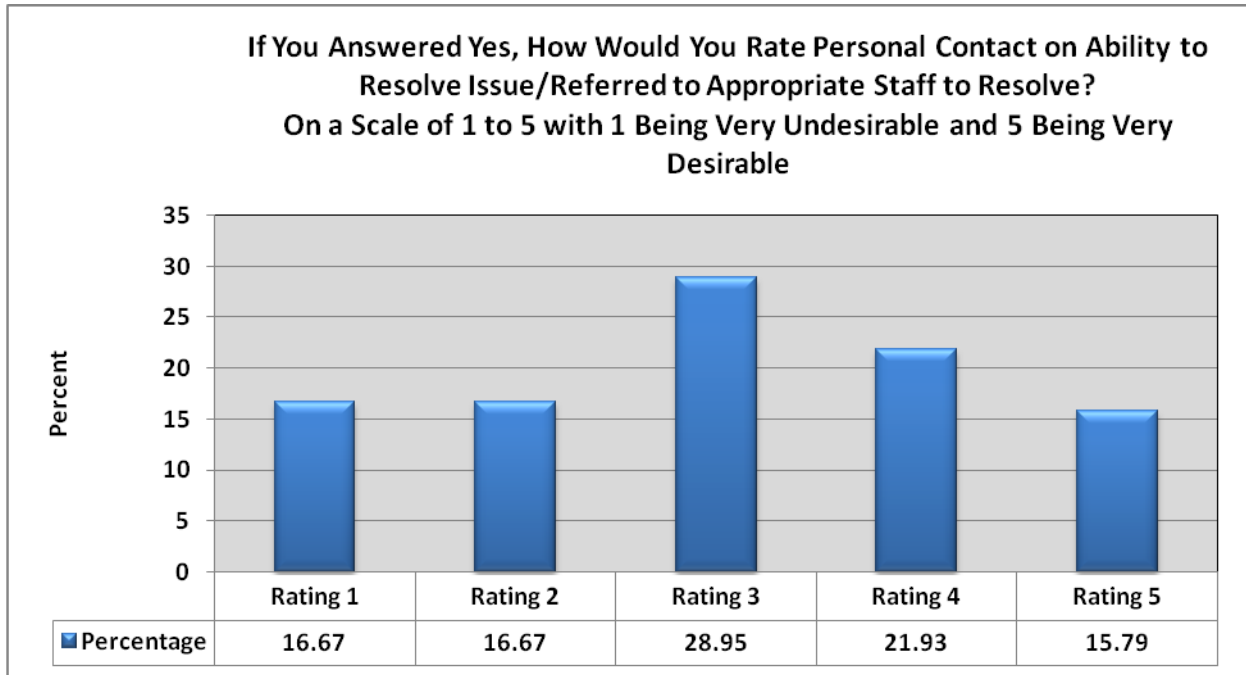


Figure 6 shows the rating that the individual gave for the ability of the selectman or government staff that they have had contact with to resolve issues that were brought to them or refer them to the appropriate staff. There were five possible ratings that could be given by the individual and those are as follows, a rating of 1 (16.67%), a rating of 2 (16.67%), a rating of 3 (28.95%), a rating of 4 (21.93%), a rating of 5 (15.79%).

Figure 7

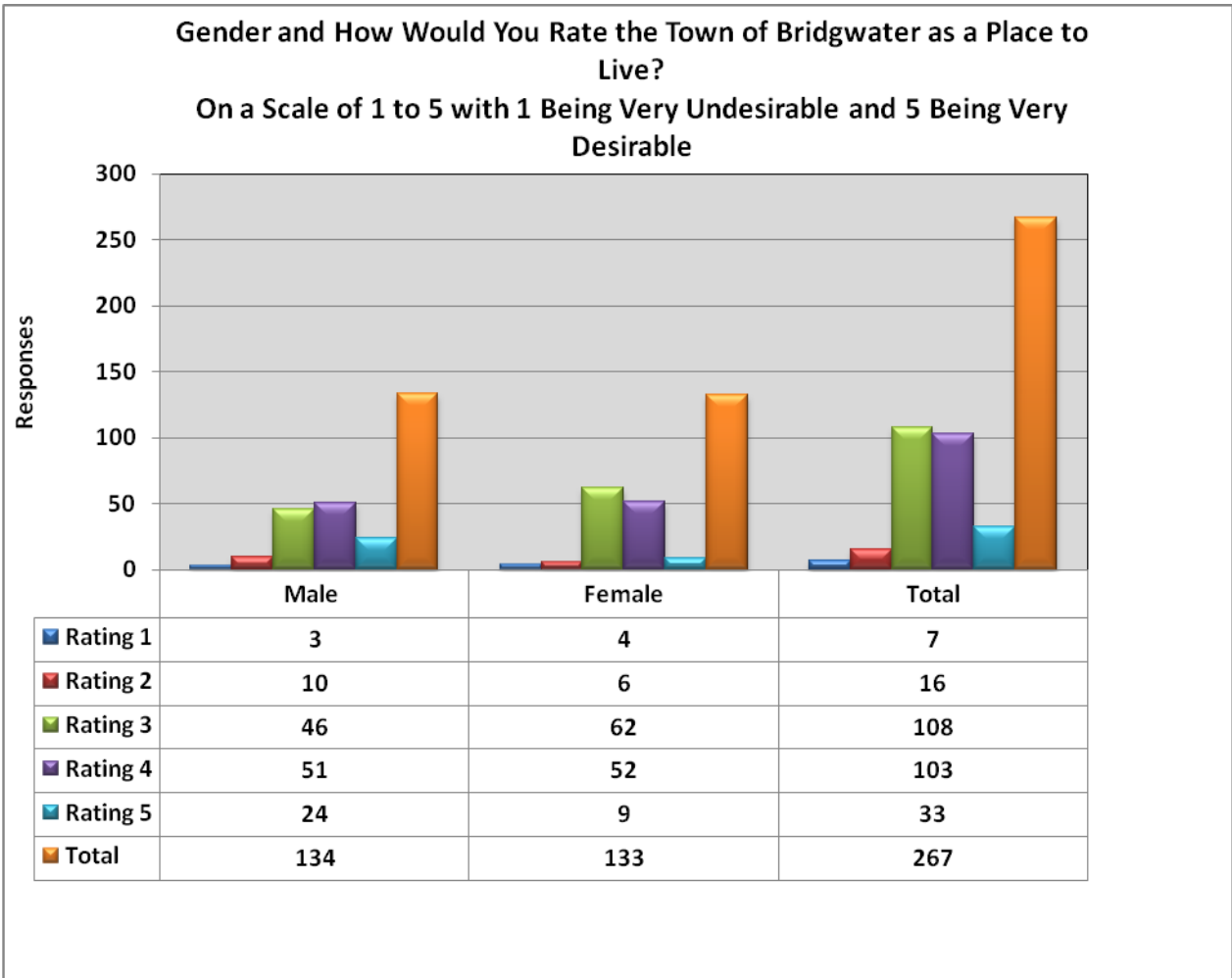


Figure 7 combines gender data and overall performance of government in one bar chart. It provides a view of the survey from the perspective of men and women. This chart uses the same scale of 1 to 5 (1 being very undesirable and 5 being very desirable) to evaluate how each respondent evaluated overall operation and government in Bridgewater. The bar chart further breaks down the data by gender. It also provides the number of respondents to each question. There were five possible choices for this question. Respondents graded Bridgewater in the following manner: Level 1: 35 Male Responses, 39 Female Responses; Level 2: 48 Male Responses, 48 Female Responses; Level 3: 39 Male Responses, 36 Female Responses; Level 4: 8 Male Responses, 6 Female Responses; Level 5: 3 Male Responses, 4 Female Responses. This data shows male and female respondents feel about the same regarding Bridgewater’s government performance.

Figure 8

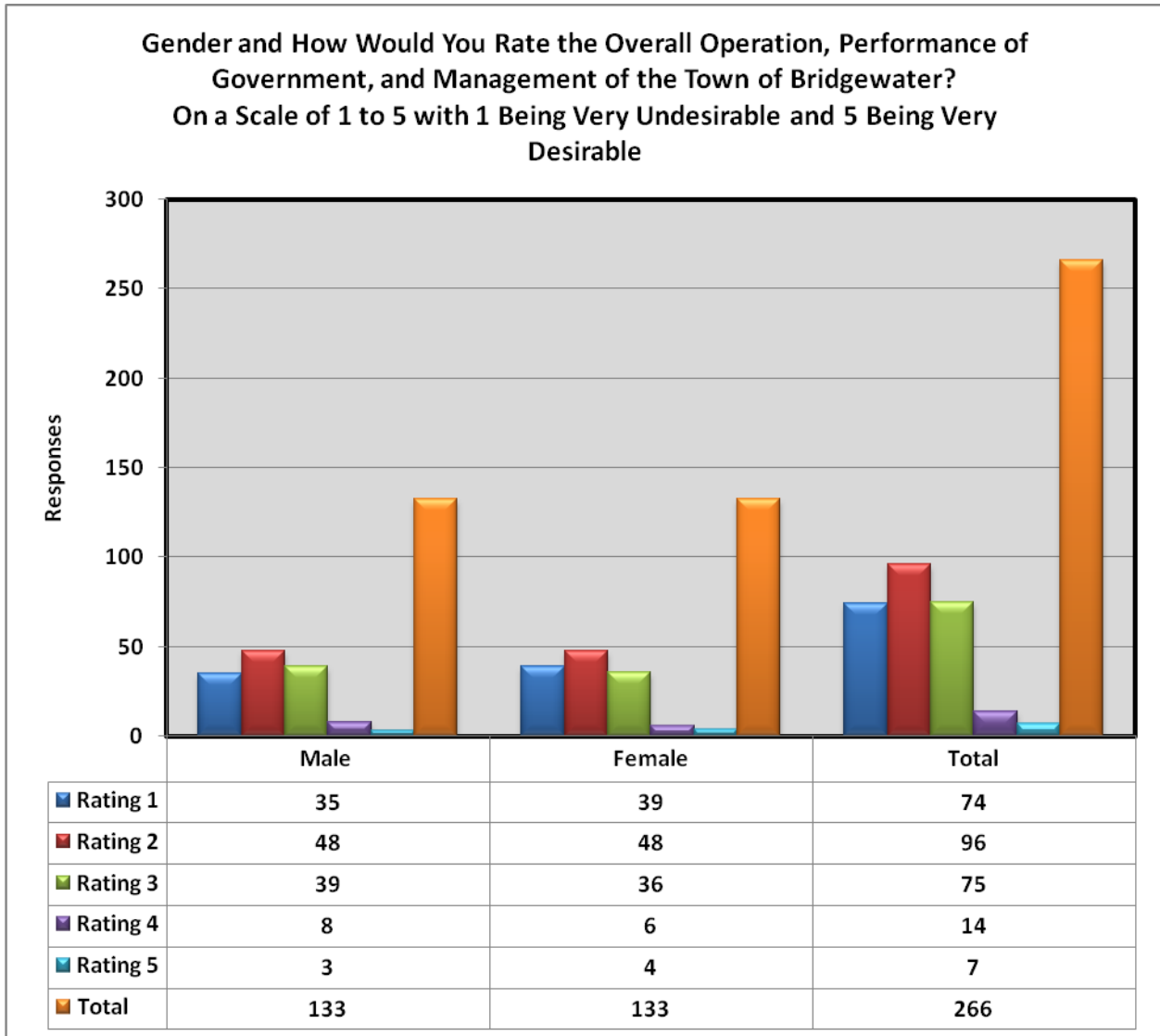


Figure 8 shows on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being very undesirable and 5 being very desirable) how each respondent evaluated the overall operation and performance of government in Bridgewater. There were five possible choices for this question. Respondents graded Bridgewater in the following manner: Level 1 (26.5%), Level 2 (34.8%), Level 3 (27.6%), Level 4 (5.0%), Level 5 (2.5%). This data shows respondents feel negatively about government performance in Bridgewater.

Figure 9

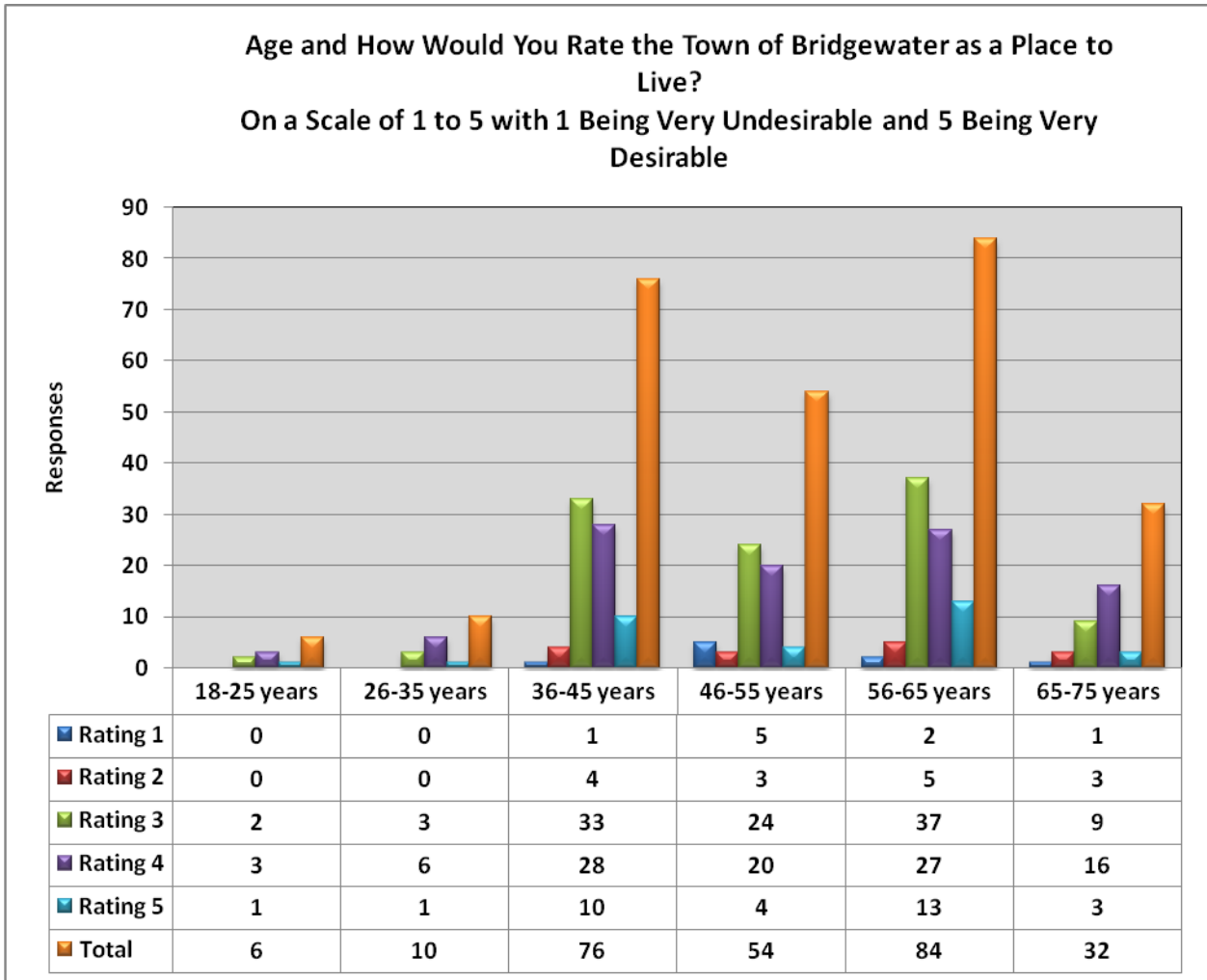
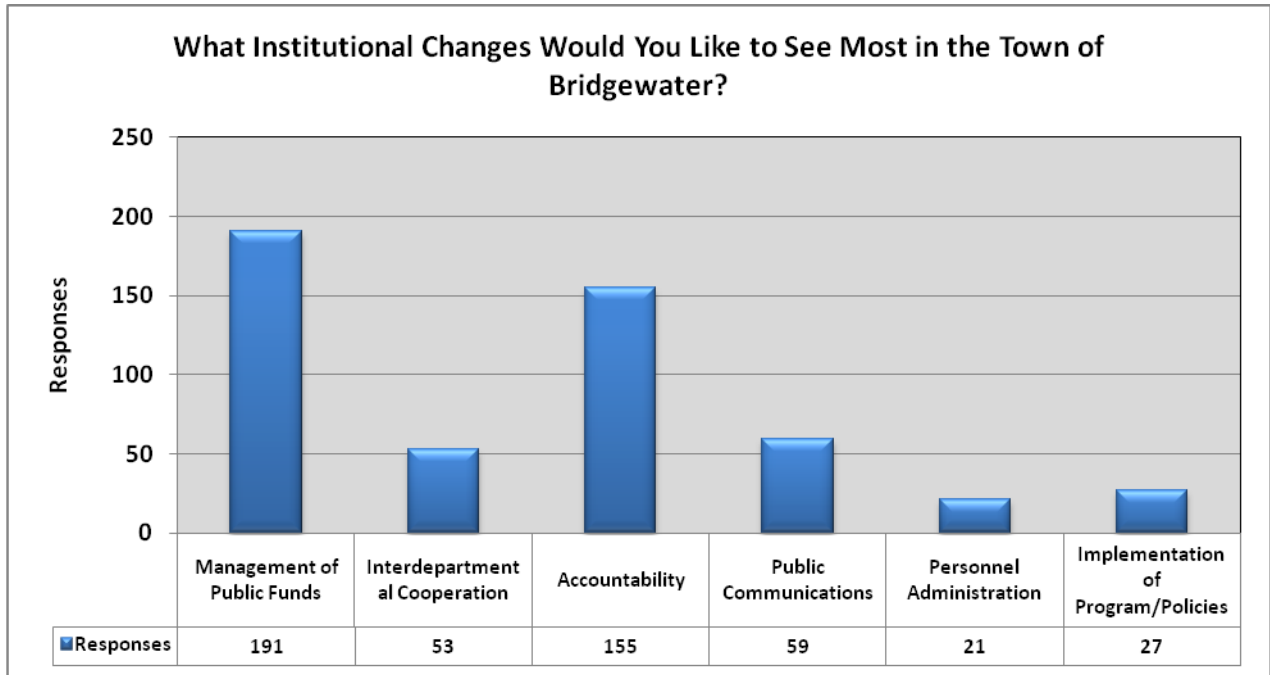


Figure 9 shows the breakdown of how individuals feel about the desirability to live in Bridgewater based on their age. For the 18-25 age group the rating break down was rating of one (0), rating of two (0), rating of three (2), rating of four (3), rating of five (1). For the 26-35 age group the rating break down was rating of one (0), rating of two (0), rating of three (3), rating of four (6), rating of five (1). For the 36-45 age group the rating break down was rating of one (1), rating of two (4), rating of three (33), rating of four (28), rating of five (10). For the 46-55 age group the rating break down was rating of one (5), rating of two (3), rating of three (24), rating of four (20), rating of five (4). For the 56-65 age group the rating break down was rating of one (2), rating of two (5), rating of three (37), rating of four (27), rating of five (13). For the 65-75 age group the rating break down was rating of one (1), rating of two (3), rating of three (9), rating of four (16), rating of five (3).

Figure 10



This chart shows how many responses were given with regards to what institutional changes one would most like to see in Bridgewater. 191 individuals said they would like to see a change in management of public funds. 53 individuals would like to see a change in interdepartmental cooperation. 155 individuals would like to see a change in accountability. 59 individuals would like to see a change in public communications. 21 individuals would like to see a change in personnel administration. 27 individuals would like to see a change in implementation of programs and policies.

Figure 11

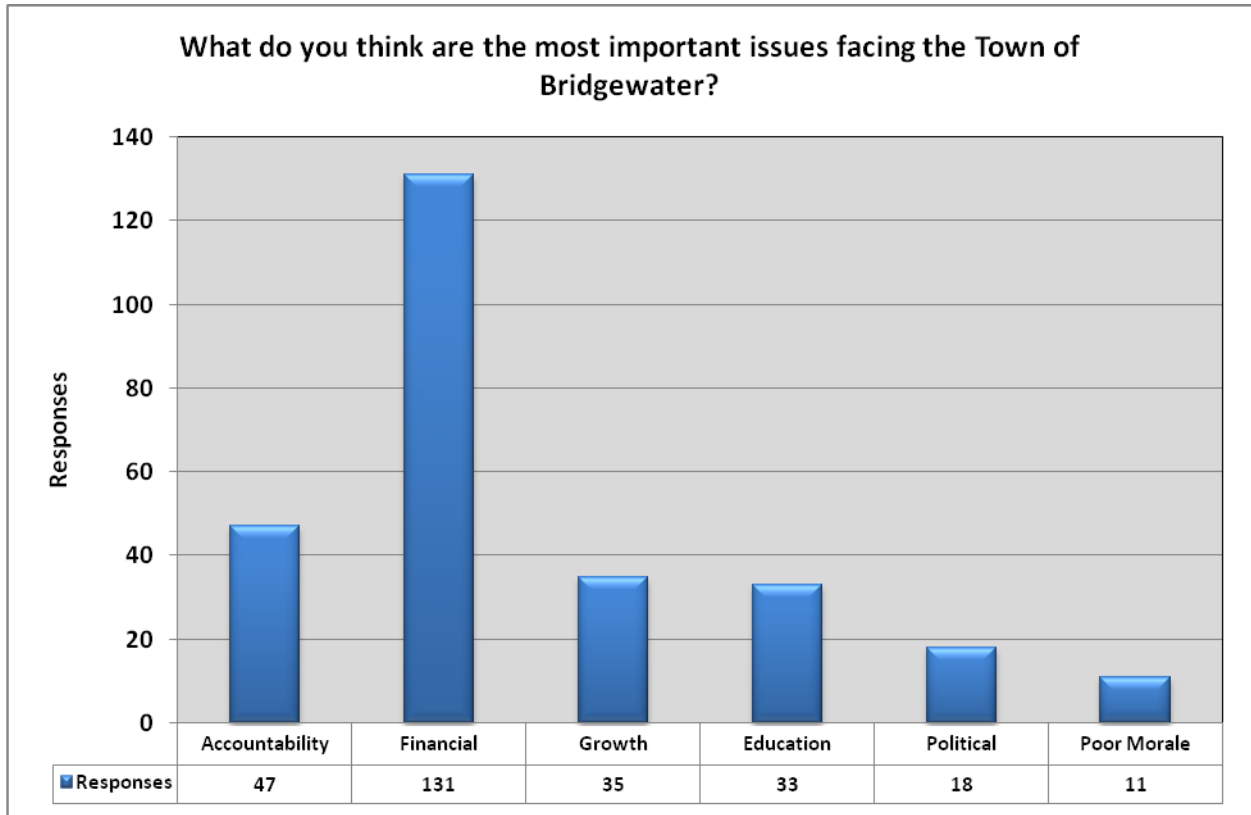
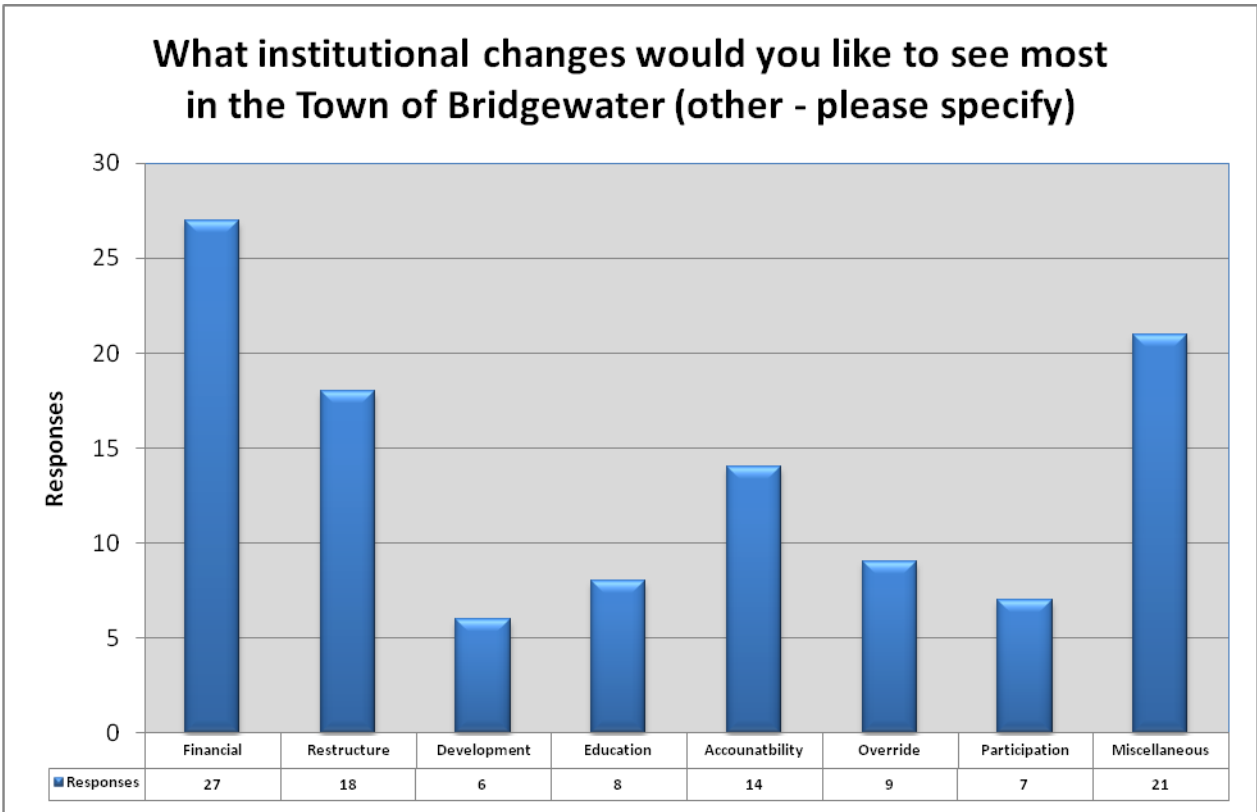


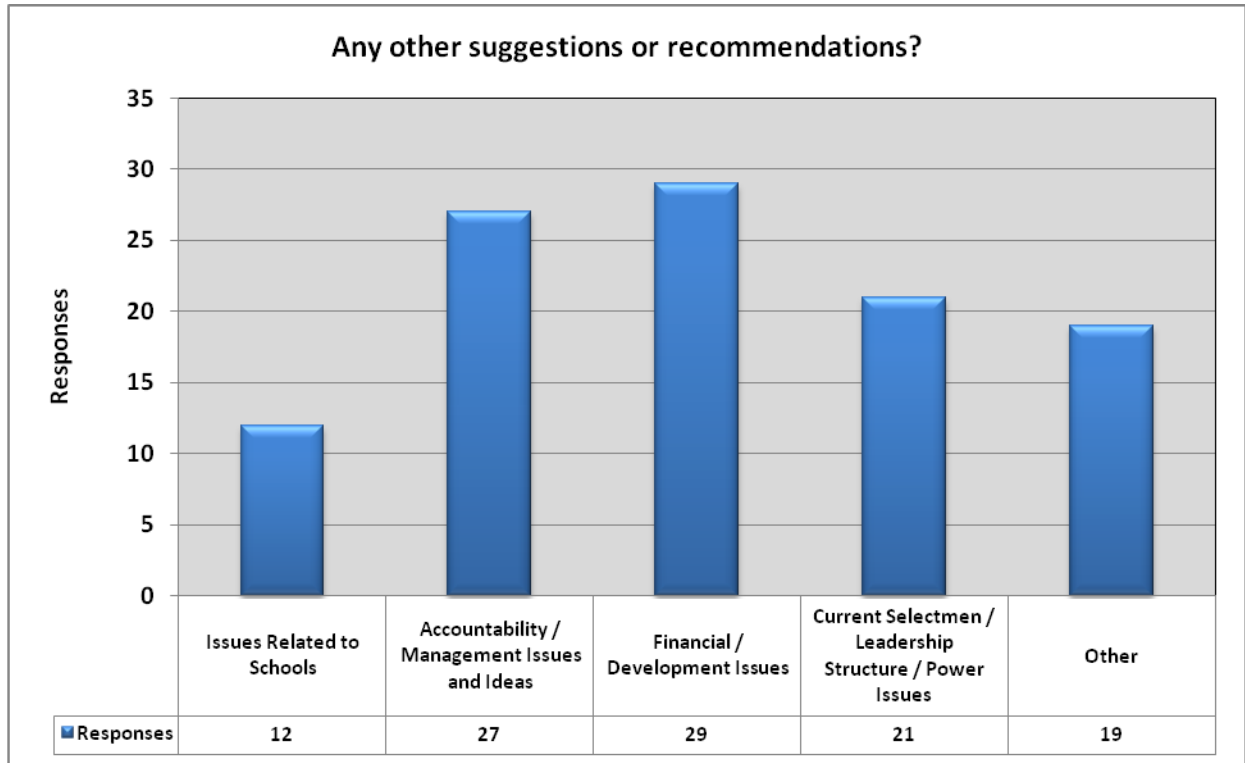
Figure 11 shows the most important issues facing the Town of Bridgewater. Although similar to the previous question of “What Institutional Changes would you like to see most in the Town of Bridgewater” this question is unique in that there were no options for pre-categorized responses; all responses to this question were written in by each respondent and then categorized into Accountability, Financial, Growth, Education, Political, and Poor Morale. Although the categories are self-explanatory the “Poor Morale” category was created to place responses that did not fall into any other category and were not constructive.

Figure 12



This is the open ended answer to question number ten. The top institutional change respondents want to see in the Town of Bridgewater is financial.

Figure 13



Based on the responses to question V31, it was necessary to include all the responses in this report. The answers have been grouped together into categories where similarities were found. The categories are as follows:

1. Issues related to schools
2. Accountability/Management Issues and Ideas
3. Financial/Development Issues
4. Current Selectmen/Leadership Structure/Power Issues
5. Other

All of the responses have provided a great deal of substance which could contribute to changes being made in the Town of Bridgewater.

Any other suggestions or recommendations?

Raw data from survey:

Issues related to the schools

- break teachers union!!! They are running this town
- Cut back on everything! Schools are way out of line. Excess fields excess everything. People in town send their children elsewhere b/c we have a billion dollar school and lousy education. Bigger is not better!
- Deregionalize elementary school- Bridgewater should have 2/3 reps on school board
- I am not from here so this is only the second time I have been to the old high school. The old school looks sound, nothing obvious jumps out as to why a new school was needed. It looks like a new high school was a poor use of taxpayer funds.
- inform seniors of the many tax reduction programs available to them. It's time for them to pony up and pay for quality education like the seniors before them.
- My husband (who is an Auditor + spends his days crunching numbers) feels that since the B-R school district is a separate entity, that a separate tax should be levied for the school district. He feels that this is a major flaw + until the tax structure be
- No builder should ever be on Planning Board or Con. Comm. Deregionalize high school and stop putting so many kids on Ed. Plans they're over used and abused. Allow Scotland links to build clubhouse/facility. Speed bumps in square and the cop sitting at Ch
- Reduce teachers' salaries +benefits
- School comm. Operation deserves a 5
- schools should be restructured to have fewer employees. Classes should be larger. Kids need input of peers
- Sever K-8 regional partnership with Raynham
- teachers should be paying their fair share
- why are we funding a system that is broken!! The School System

Accountability/ management issues and ideas

- All information presented must be accurate. All issues presented openly.
- Appoint committee to review fairness of how town meetings are run.
- change government leaders to stop using scare tactics and listen to the public who elected them
- Change health insurance and pensions. Increase fee for transfer station. Limit hook + ladder engine response for ambulance runs. Send extra personnel in sedan unless all engine company is really needed.
- Communication
- do not allow people to run/ hold office where their private business ethically challenges their position.i.e. Business owners on planning committee; contractors holding inspector positions.
- Don't send a fire truck with an ambulance when not needed. It is an artificial interpretation of runs that were made to substantiate the budget.
- Encourage better participation from all residents- more opportunity for all people to be involved- encourage those not involved to be more involved
- Encourage citizens to invest in their community.

- Form a committee to work on attracting businesses with low auto traffic, stop burning yard waste, offer real knowledge about pesticide and lawn chemical use, add polling at Bridgewater Housing Authority, make recycling more convenient, Conserve! Conserve
- Get other (red flags) instead of police to stand around public works!!!
- Get rid of job hiring through nepotism.
- have a menu style override
- Hire professional town manager.
- I am hopeful as the population increases that the proper management structure is implemented.
- I wonder if we might be able to vote online or by telephone, using our social security numbers
- Increase in town safety i.e.: Fire and police is now more prudent investment before giving more money to the schools. Thank you.
- Let's make public safety #1 priority reduce town's share of medical to a lower # more in line with other towns
- listen to the voters the 1st time!
- listen to what townspeople are saying and stop forcing things on us!
- More public communication. Perhaps update town website more often than once per quarter
- Need to do a survey to determine what people who don't want an override are willing to do without.
- Possibly raise funds for services. Stronger dept for bringing business in. Better management of the industrial parks. More complete accountability.
- The town can't use scare tactics. If someone says we are going to lost police/ fire/ ambulance and we don't you will consistently have problems.
- too many elected positions (rec/ planning/ BOH). Stronger managerial skills needed
- Use some of the talent you already have (e.g. Stan Kravitz to promote businesses coming into town). Get someone in B'water who knows something about management and someone smart enough to control and direct departments and oversee expenditures-- each of u
- we need a master plan that will be implemented
- Where is the light that was supposed to go up at Rt. 18 & High St.?? Get residents to realize they get what they pay for!

Financial/ development issues

- Abandon the idea that taxpayers' pockets are deep and that you may not "help yourself" to taxpayers financial resources every time there is a financial problem. There is no bottomless taxpayer well of money.
- Attract business
- Change old high school to commercial area and sell to be made into a mall area. Use the money to pay off debt. Deregionalize new high school and fire Flinn.
- Continue to get more business into town!
- Continue to go after businesses to locate in town to help take the tax burden off individual home owners
- Cut all funding to seniors- see how they like it!
- Don't spend every dollar you have; require each dept to level fund for several years to build up reserves. Reduce benefits to town employees so they are closer to those in private sector. Encourage business growth, especially Bedford St.
- I think the people spoke on the first vote regarding the override. I for one am angry that we had to vote again until the budget committee gets its way. Enough is enough.

- I would like to see more resources + more business friendly decisions in our town. How about a local bakery, bookstore, Panera, Dairy Queen, cinema, etc., etc.,
- I would love to see positive changes in Bridgewater. We need more cash into our town government by an override or increased tax base/businesses
- In order for town depts. To operate efficiently they need to be adequately funded. The 3 point plan is a start but it will be difficult to complete
- Keep spending within income stop wasting hard earned tax \$
- let's vote again on 2.5 ASAP. I love my Saturday mornings.
- Limit any override vote to once every two years only! Override vote should have had six override votes not one-and that \$ had to go only for that one purpose
- Line item voted/ per dept. including police + fire
- Look at insurance policies for town employees w/ health savings accts (which can lower premium costs, give more health choices for care. Extend town water sewer further down Rt. 18 to open up ability of new businesses to build. Negotiate fair levels of r
- Make gov't + school benefits in line with private sector benefits
- make selectman do their jobs. Balance the budget and not tax the people
- More business revenue is needed vs. housing not necessarily retail, but some sort of business.
- Only operate within prop 2 1/2 budget. Control town wages and pensions to equal private sector
- please do not ask for any more override votes- live with funds available without 2 1/2 haunting our lives
- Raise taxes!
- re-structure union contracts so that employees and managers are more affordable. Raise retirement ages for public employees.
- Revise policies of payments to retired/disabled, etc. Town employees- pensions, health care, etc. Put more in line with private industry.
- Run like a business; don't spend more than you bring in!
- Spend money more wisely
- town buildings need repair. More business. Signs on businesses should be all small and consistent
- Transfer state...? should be a revenue generator. It is break even - most towns generate 200% profit over budget. I completed an analysis by town. Medical for retired workers- there is a provision that would cover cost and make additional funding available
- We'd be floating on money if we could get the school system privatized. Benefit packages would resemble the real world. Elect Joe Gillis King of Bridgewater.
- Why do we need an override vote every year. Use our tax \$ wisely!

Current selectmen/ leadership structure/ power issues

- (very much) we appreciate those who volunteer to perform studies like this and others that have occurred over the years. I truly question motives of some that sit on the board of selectman. I believe some are self serving + do not represent the towns people
- Better selectmen
- C'mon, let's grow up: mayor/ council structure to break logjam.
- Change to manager/mayor
- combine w/ East and West Bridgewater and become a city
- Increased opportunities for citizen participation
- McCain 2008

- need another way to get info out about governmental opinions, so people know what they would choose on #10- for those who don't go to the forum- maybe on cable, or tent on the common.
- Need strong leadership. Get rid of old boy network. Talk to the people!
- Need town planner. Need economic development not to be controlled by those in town who hold positions who are in conflict.
- New selectmen
- Poor leadership
- Restructure all government, and compensations
- solicit for more volunteers to fill in for town functions
- The answer is not demonizing public servants (elected/appointed) but hard eyed analysis and honest communication whereby all stakeholders share in the cost of the solution. A little hope is offered by a move to representative govt. vs. town meeting. Good
- the town needs a centralized, strong town manager form of govt. to enhance accountability
- Town manager as representative. Town meeting
- Town Mayor + 9 Council (one each precinct + 2 at large) The T.C. would be a check on the exec. Branch (mayor)
- town meetings need to be changed so that selectmen don't have the power to achieve their own personal agendas at the expense of the town
- Town mgr. needs to be stronger. Not enough women actively involved
- We should elect a mayor instead of a Board of Selectmen. We are large enough for that. Further, I believe that BSC & churches should pay property taxes.

Other

- (regarding 8b) This varied depending on who I contacted. Generally speaking town employees/ staff tried to be helpful to answer any questions I had. Some selectman returned and answered my e-mails, others did not.
- I don't feel like I know enough about the pros + cons of the various forms listed in #10 to give a recommendation as to changes needed. Will the town gov't committee provide a report (or have they already) to help citizen sort these options out)
- I moved here from Randolph. I don't want what happened there to happen here. Take a good look!!
- Keep this stuff up! Great Idea!
- keep up the good work + thank you for taking part in this survey of committee. Educate people on the dangers of apathy
- Lots! I'll try to attend study committee meetings.
- love the greenery, plantings in town center
- more cooperation
- My husband currently works 5- midnight and I am home full-time with two school age children. In order to attend the regular and special town meetings last year, my husband had to take a vacation day from work for each one. To hire a babysitter until 10:00
- no
- No
- None, that comes within the jurisdiction of town government.
- Openness for change. More business emphasis, less residential development.
- our involvement w/ zoning board was far from positive. Mr. Lawton was downright rude
- override 2 1/2

- prop. 2 1/2 outdated- lack of state support (state aid reduced)- we (townspeople) must support our town or town will fall apart. Homes will plunge in value. Who in their right mind would want to live in a town without a library (public), senior center, et
- Thank you for all your work!! Get a Charter!
- Thank you!
- Unsure
- Vote Yes!